

essential to sustaining progress as it has been to ending the war and laying the foundation for peace.

I expect the size of the overall NATO force in Bosnia and Herzegovina will remain similar to that of the current SFOR. However, the U.S. contribution would decline by about 20 percent, as our Allies and partners continue to shoulder an increasing share of the burden.

Although I do not propose a fixed end-date for this presence, it is by no means open-ended. Instead, the goal of the military presence is to establish the conditions under which Dayton implementation can continue without the support of a major NATO-led military force. To achieve this goal, we have established concrete and achievable benchmarks, such as the reform of police and media, the elimination of illegal pre-Dayton institutions, the conduct of elections according to democratic norms, elimination of cross-entity barriers to commerce, and a framework for the phased and orderly return of refugees. NATO and U.S. forces will be reduced progressively as achievement of these benchmarks improves conditions, enabling the international community to rely largely on traditional diplomacy, international civil personnel, economic incentives and disincentives, confidence-building measures, and negotiation to continue implementing the Dayton Accords over the longer term.

In fact, great strides already have been made towards fulfilling these aims, especially in the last ten months since the United States re-energized the Dayton process. Since Dayton, a stable military environment has been created; over 300,000 troops returned to civilian life and 6,600 heavy weapons have been destroyed. Public security is improving through the restructuring, retraining and reintegration of local police. Democratic elections have been held at all levels of government and hard-line nationalists—especially in the Republika Srpska—are increasingly marginalized. Independent media and political pluralism are expanding. Over 400,000 refugees and displaced persons have returned home—110,000 in 1997. One third of the publicly-indicted war criminals have been taken into custody.

Progress has been particularly dramatic since the installation of a pro-Dayton, pro-democracy Government in Republika Srpska in December. Already, the capital of Republika Srpska has been moved from Pale to Banja Luka; media are being restructured along democratic lines; civil police are generally cooperating with the reform process; war criminals are surrendering; and Republika Srpska is working directly with counterparts in the Federation to prepare key cities in both entities for major returns of refugees and displaced persons.

At the same time, long-standing obstacles to inter-entity cooperation also are being broken down: a common flag now flies over Bosnian institutions, a common currency is being printed, a common automobile license plate is being manufactured, and mail is being delivered and trains are running across the inter-entity boundary line.

Although progress has been tangible, many of these achievements still are reversible and a robust international military presence still is required at the present time to sustain the progress. I am convinced that the NATO-led force—and U.S. participation in it—can be progressively reduced as conditions continue to improve, until the implementation process is capable of sustaining itself without a major international military presence.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
March 3, 1998.

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 4.

Remarks Supporting Food Safety Legislation

March 4, 1998

The President. Thank you very much for the terrific remarks. Let me—first I want to move Senator Mikulski's box. [*Laughter*]

Senator Barbara Mikulski. I don't want it to be a public health hazard. [*Laughter*]

The President. Put it on some of those little germs. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, Senator Mikulski, Senator Kennedy, Congresswoman Eshoo, Congresswoman Millender-McDonald, and Congressman Pallone, thank you, sir. I'd also like to thank Secretary Shalala, Secretary Glickman, and Ambassador Barshefsky for the work they have done, and the Vice President for the work he has done on this issue over the last, now, more than 5 years.

Last night I went to New York to the celebration of Time magazine's 75th anniversary, and a number of us were asked to do portraits of heroic figures of the 20th century. I talked last night about Franklin Roosevelt, and we're in the Roosevelt Room here. But today I'm thinking more of Theodore Roosevelt, for it was Theodore Roosevelt at the beginning of this century who made an unprecedented national commitment for that time to protect America's families from unsafe food.

It was at the dawn of the industrial age, when Americans were moving from farm to city, for the first time buying their food from other people instead of growing it themselves. Roosevelt ensured that for that time the rules we had made our food as safe as we could make it. President Roosevelt set a high standard nearly, now, a century ago. It has been a personal commitment of mine and of this administration to update that standard for the 21st century. As the world changes, new challenges arise, it takes new methods to do the old job right.

The Vice President has told you about some things our administration has done to modernize food safety, to keep our food supply the safest in the world. I was literally stunned when I came here to find out that we were inspecting meat in the United States in the same way we had inspected it since 1910, and in the same way that dogs inspect it today, by smelling it and touching it. We're doing a little better now. *[Laughter]*

But as has been made painfully apparent today by the remarks of our two Members of Congress and by you, ma'am, there is still a lot we still have to do to meet the challenges to food safety posed by new patterns of trade and commerce in food.

It wasn't long ago that you could walk to the produce section of a grocery store, look around, and find no more than a dozen items

that would be there all year round. Today, thanks to this global food market, it's not uncommon to find up to 400 varieties, almost all of them year around. You can get summer squash in the chill of winter and winter squash in the heat of summer now. And the farmer who grows these vegetables most likely no longer lives down the road from you. He might live across the ocean or on the other side of the world.

It's more important than ever under these circumstances, now that we're getting the benefits of these new patterns, which are manifold, it's more important than ever that the food we eat be inspected and protected, from orchard to fruit basket, from farm to table, wherever the orchard or the farm may be. And when families join us—and millions and millions of Americans are joining us—as they walk through the produce section, we know that none of them should have to worry about where the food comes from or whether it's safe.

Food safety really is part of the basic contract now between the consumers of our country and their Government. Any food that doesn't meet clear and strict standards should not come into the United States. It's that simple.

Last fall, I announced a new initiative to ensure that fruits and vegetables coming from abroad are as safe as those grown here at home and to halt at the border or the dock any food that fails to meet those standards. I directed the Secretaries of Health and Human Services and Agriculture to report on our progress in improving food safety at home and abroad. This is their report; they've just given it to me before we came in here. It is a good and thorough one. It underscores my belief that while we have done a lot, more must be done, and we need the help of Congress to do more.

The next important step to protect America's families from food-borne illnesses requires Congress to enact the bill introduced by Senator Mikulski, Senator Kennedy, and others in the Senate, by Representatives Eshoo, Pallone, and others in the House. This is not a political issue. It's not a Democratic or a Republican issue. It is simply an issue whose time has come. We are getting all the benefits of global agriculture. We have

to rise to the challenges of the same trends. By giving the FDA the tools and the technology it needs, the legislation will give Americans the extra protection they deserve.

At the beginning of the century, Theodore Roosevelt recognized that new challenges demand new Government, in this case, a Government that demands responsibility from industry and producers, but also provides clearer, stricter standards of safety and the means to enforce them. Our families enjoy the greatest bounty and variety of food in the world. We have to ensure that it will also be the safest food in the world.

The 21st century will be interesting for many reasons. Among them will be the increasing variety of food from all over the world that all kinds of Americans will be able to buy in their neighborhood stores. It will be one more way that people, I hope, will have a more enjoyable life in the next century. It will only happen if the food is safe and people know it's safe, so they're not worried when they shop.

Again, I want to join the Vice President, if I might in closing, in thanking the Senate for passing the bill yesterday to reduce the standard of drunk driving to .08. I think it's very important, it will save hundreds of lives a year. I hope the House will follow suit, and I hope that's an indication that these kind of public safety issues will be high on the agenda of Congress and that the bill that our Members who are here today are pushing so hard will find a speedy and positive reception in the Congress.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:03 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Statement on the Death of Fred Friendly

March 4, 1998

Hillary and I were deeply saddened today to learn of the death of Fred Friendly. One of the giants of American journalism, Fred started his career in radio, forming a partnership with Edward R. Murrow on the radio series "Hear It Now," which became the landmark television series "See It Now." To

this day, the programs Fred produced four decades ago rank among the finest journalism of the century, exposing the demagoguery of Joe McCarthy, the poverty of migrant farmers, and so many other social ills.

Fred was always willing to challenge the powerful. He led CBS News at a time when television was just beginning to demonstrate its power to the world. When he left CBS, Fred became a pioneer in public television and public television documentaries. In more recent years, he has served as the conscience of his industry, exploring the ethics of journalism and teaching and training journalists to come. Through his many writings and television productions, he succeeded in his goal: to force the American public to think.

Our prayers today are with Fred's wife, Ruth, and their children.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on the Political Status of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

March 4, 1998

I am pleased that the House of Representatives has passed a bill which establishes a process for determining the future political status of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The bill does not impose onerous, unworkable, unprecedented, or unconstitutional language requirements on the citizens of Puerto Rico, unlike some proposals that were advanced in Congress.

I have always called for enabling Puerto Ricans to choose among options available for their future: continuing the Commonwealth arrangement, independence, or statehood—whatever future decided by majority choice. The House action is a victory for democracy and against exclusion. It is consistent with our country's repeated commitment to Puerto Rican self-determination, and consistent with the pride all Americans can take in the contributions those of Hispanic descent have made to all America.